



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greene County Juvenile Department recognized nationally for data and statistics research

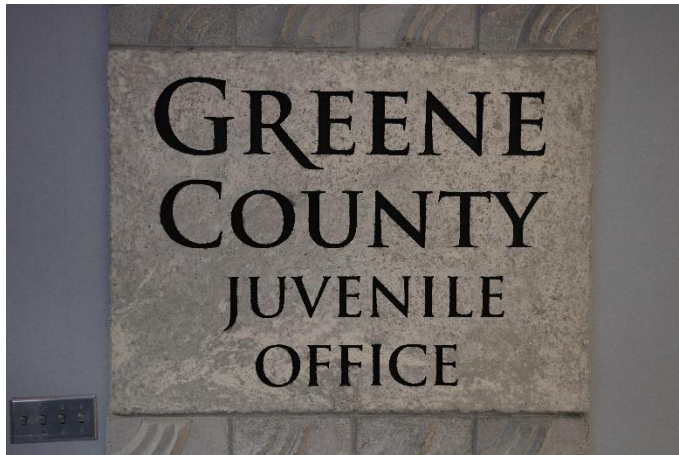


From left to right: Chief Juvenile Officer Bill Prince, Director of Case Management Staci Denney, Director of Youth & Family Programming Julie Austin

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Under the leadership of Bill Prince, the Greene County Juvenile Department has significantly grown and changed over the last five years. In 2019, the County was selected to participate in the Dennis M. Mondoro Probation Project and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Implementation Site Project. Both use evidence-informed methods to transform juvenile justice and probation systems.

Since that time, the County has created a ‘Quality Unit’ that focuses on measurable statistics and useful data to keep troubled youth away from Juvenile Detention and deeper involvement in the juvenile justice system. Prince, the Chief Juvenile Officer, says Greene County is the first of its size to have such a robust data department. The County has been working with other larger juvenile justice systems including Seattle, WA and Las Vegas, NV. Additionally, the County’s consultants have used the Department’s data reports as suggested templates and ideas for other jurisdictions.

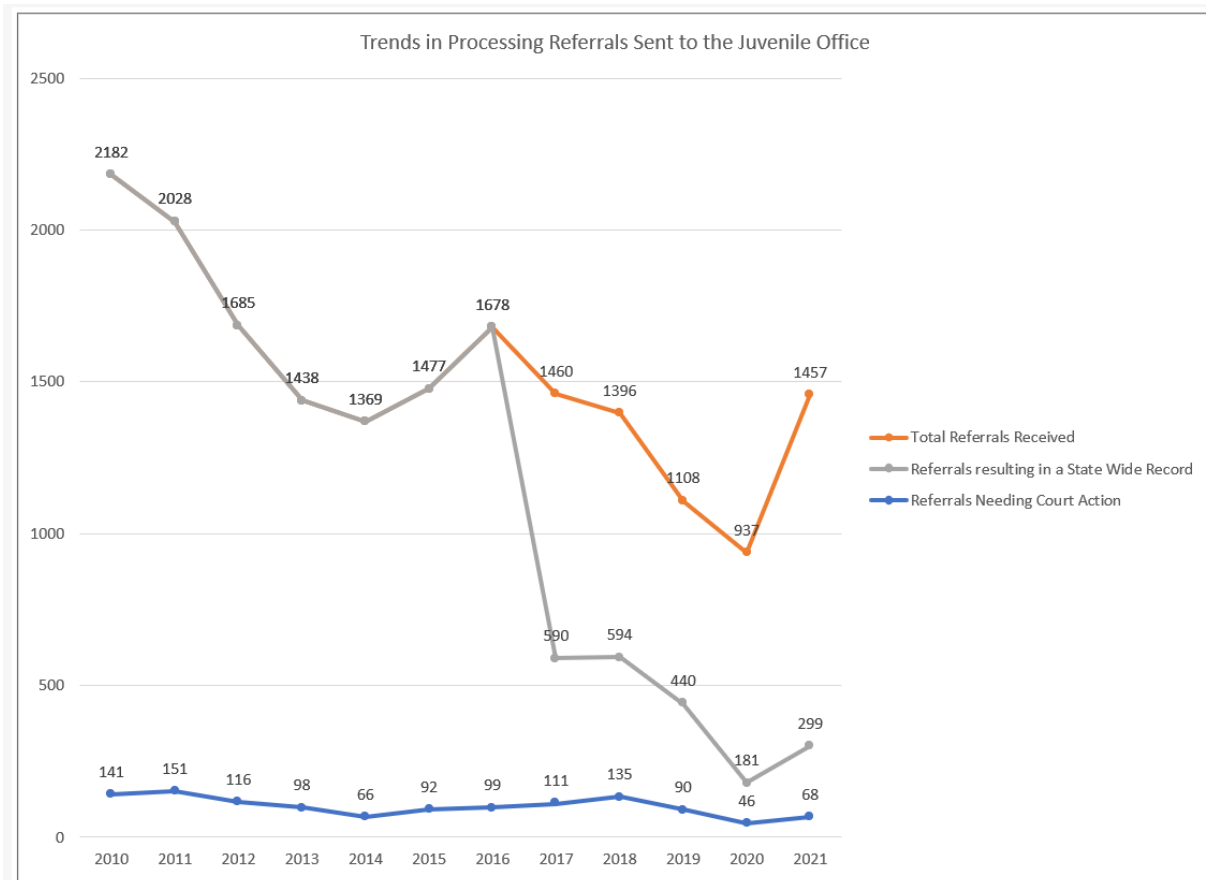
“I think that the biggest impact Bill has had on this office is creating structure where there really wasn’t any,” said Brittany O’Brien, Director of Legal Services. “Prior to him being Chief Juvenile Officer there were no policy or manuals or written process, there was no grievance process, the office structure created division, we were focused more on law enforcement and less on helping families.”



Professionals from the Mondoro Project made seventeen recommendations to the County. The Juvenile Office is planning to implement those changes in the next three to five years. This will help the Department better align with the best practices in the field which are oriented around advances in understanding adolescent development.

“There is an ever-growing understanding within juvenile justice that relationship-based solutions and interventions are far more successful than punitive interventions,” said Julie Austin, Director of Youth and Family Programming. “Accountability remains an important part of the process, but providing resources and services that allow youth to form positive relationships and identity is also a key part of insuring these kids become productive citizens down the road.”

This year, the County has also added a full-time licensed clinician to provide direct individual and family therapy, along with therapeutic groups. The number of referrals sent to the Juvenile Office, that resulted in a state-wide record, has drastically dropped since 2016. The graphic below shows the total referrals received as well as referrals that needed court action.



Below is a list of additions and changes to the Juvenile Department over the last several years:

2021:

- The Youth Detention Facility was placed on 'Diversion Status' to focus on safe staffing requirements, training, and adopting a trauma informed approach for youth housed in Detention.
- County awarded to participate in technical assistance program to provide best practices for both child abuse and neglect cases and commercial sexual exploitation cases.

2020:

- Hired a Family Treatment Court Project Coordinator and Peer Support Specialists to work with individuals with substance use disorders that are also involved in the child welfare system, as those individuals have lost custody of their children and are working toward reunification.
- Purchased 'Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths' tool that helps Deputy Juvenile Officers know where to target interventions and build more meaningful and helpful action plans.

- In an effort to curb unregulated funding and use of tax payer dollars, the Juvenile Office moved to an attorney contract agreement. This has greatly increased cost efficiency.

2019:

- Added a fourth division of Greene County Family Court.
- Provided peer group support to families through Parent Café and Teen Café, in partnership with Community Partnership of the Ozarks.
- Diversion Database developed to capture more indicators, such if families were interested in services and whether or not an action plan was created.
- Awarded a \$750,000 grant to enhance Family Treatment Court.

2018:

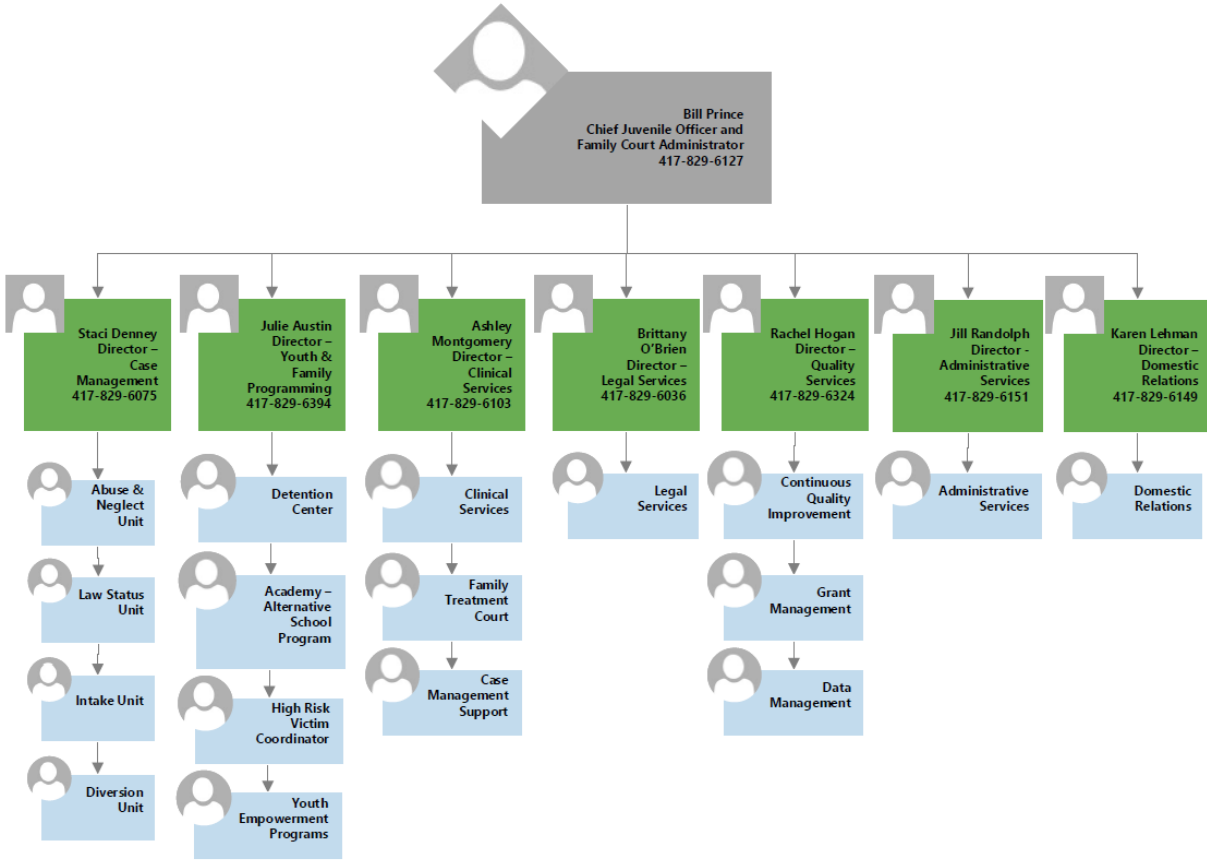
- Diversion Unit formed to help separate youth that had a lower risk of recidivating. Engagement with Deputy Juvenile Officers are voluntary and more service oriented.
- Research Management Analyst hired to help track the number of youths being diverted, in addition to, analyzing data within Juvenile Information Systems.
- Community Based Services programming moved to a larger space at 933 Robberson in Springfield to provide more services and therapeutic programs.
- The Greene County Domestic Relations Unit added a service for educating parents that have a high amount of conflict in their relationship. This program is called ‘CORE’, which stands for confliction resolution.

2017:

- Adoption of the Missouri Juvenile Officer Performance Standards. The Juvenile Office aimed to help youth and families before a youth has a ‘legally sufficient’ situation that would result in a statewide record and causing harm to individuals, businesses, and the community.
- A second Licensed Professional Counselor hired to help youth with mental health needs.
- Continued participation in the Judicial Engagement Team through the Casey Family Programs to help manage abuse and neglect cases.

“The Juvenile Office values youth resiliency, which aims to enhance youths’ protective factors and reduce risk factors that may cause re-offending behavior,” said Rachel Hogan, Director of Quality Services. “Our office knows how important reunification is for families. We continue to research what’s best for kids and understand the difference between risk factors and safety factors.”

Below is the functional organization structure of the current Greene County Juvenile Department:



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Greene County is the State of Missouri's fourth most populous county, serving approximately 295,000 people. Its mission is to provide all citizens of Greene County, including those in its cities, a safe and thriving community through excellent customer service, unparalleled dedication, and the efficient use of taxpayer dollars. The Greene County Commission is the executive body of Greene County operating under guidelines established in the Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri. Within that authority the Commission enacts ordinances, resolutions and policies, supervises the activities of county departments, fixes salaries, adopts the annual budget, provides for construction and other services, and conducts hearings on planning and zoning matters.

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